THE CENTRAL AMERICAN QUESTION.

SPEECH

OF

HON. SAMUEL R. CURTIS, OF IOWA.

Delivered in the House of Representatives, January 15, 1858.

The CHAIRMAN stated that the pending question was on the amendment of the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. THAYER] to the amendment of the gentleman from Tennessee, [Mr. MAYNARD,] moving the reference of a certain portion of the message to the Committee on Military Affairs; and that the gentleman from Iowa [Mr. CURTIS] was entitled to the floor.

Mr. CURTIS. In the remarks which I made last evening, Mr. Chairman, I undertook to show that it has been the policy of this Government, from its earliest history, to endeavor, in various ways, and in different sections of the Union, to restrain its citizens, lest they should involve us in difficulty and war with other nations of the earth. I appeal to you, sir, and to the gentleman from Mississippi, [Mr. QUITMAN,] whether, in every instance where this Government has exercised this power, it did not appear necessary and proper, and did not restrain our citizens within due limits, without imposing upon them improper restraints; and whether it did not, at the same time, secure to this country its peace and honor among the nations of the earth? Why, sir, what would have become of our relations at the mouth of the Mississippi river, if it had not been for the check given to Burr and his expedition? We would have been involved in war with Spain, so as to have precluded the possibility of a treaty which soon after secured us that country, which would probably have still belonged to Spain. Instead of having Representatives here from the State of Louisiana and the State I have the honor in part to represent, that vast territory west of the "Father of Waters" might still have been retained and represented by the hidalgos of Old Spain.

In the instance referred to as the interposition by President Monroe, to prevent incursions into Florida, and the usurpation of power by a lawless foreign invader of Spanish domain, that also saved to us a change of government which, in all probability, would have long postponed, or perhaps entirely defeated, the treaty which secured to us the two Floridas. And such was the encroachment upon the territory of the gentleman from Georgia, that had it not been for the interposition of the Government, that State might have fallen under the control of the Spanish or the revolutionary authorities, and there would have been no Representatives in this Hall from that State. It has been by the restraint which the neutrality laws have put upon our citizens, that our country has been sustained in its position among the nations of the earth, and that our citizens have been prevented from lawless assaults upon neighboring nations, with whom our country has maintained relations of friendship and peace. Is there any cause now; do recent events, does the history of our country for the last few years, impose new necessities for the repeal of these neutrality laws? I argue that there are none in the past history of the country; and if gentlemen will contemplate the policy of our Government during the last four or five years, they will see how unfortunate it is that these laws have not been executed against various repeated disturbances of neighboring Republics. So far from recent events presenting an argument for repealing these laws, the misfortune is, that either in their form, or because of negligence on the part of the late Administration, these laws have not saved our neighbors from devastation, and our national honor from unfortunate reproach.

Mr. Chairman, the expedition of this man, Walker, which has given occasion to the present debate, is the strongest possible evidence of the necessity of a vigilant execution of the neutrality laws, and their maintenance, or enlargement of their power to restrain wrong. If these laws had been better executed, if the Administration had not to some extent permitted these expeditions to have gone on, we would now have no occasion to discuss this matter in this Hall. There would then have been no controversy as to the relative

merits of this Gen. Walker and one of the commanders of our navy, who took and sent him home as a criminal escaped from the justice due him; and the question would not be before us, as to which of them was the better man—he who led the expedition, or the man who checked and concluded it.

Why, sir, is this country induced to take up this question of Central American affairs? Why has our attention for years past been called to that particular theatre, instead of the eyes of the nation being turned to the development of the interior of our own country? I think there is a fundamental error in the assumption upon which all this Central American sympathy is based; that is, that Central America is the especial or only route for the highway of nations; and being such a peculiar locality, it should be controlled by us. Where is Central America? You who live upon the seaboard, and are in the habit of contemplating distances as immaterial when you have connections by sea—you may regard the distance of trifling importance; and because your vessels often float that way, you feel that the distance to Central America is comparatively short; but we who live in the central portion of this Union look at the long line of travel before that territory can be reached. We have to pass all the Mexican States; we have to pass a thousand miles through or round a Republic that is always a political antagonism to our own; we have to pass a dominion where the inhabitants speak a different language, adopt a different religion, and different institutions. Eight millions of Mexican inhabitants lie between this country and Central America. Central America is therefore not contiguous; is very remote; and there are intervening all the States of Mexico, all of which are political antagonisms to us. Why, then, do gentlemen turn their eyes so far away from our own country, to seek for an opportunity to display our patronage and power? Why do they go beyond the Rio Grande for the purpose of exercising the functions of this great Republic? Why are our citizens stimulated, by frequent reference to these Central American States, to go to seek for themselves fortunes and fame far beyond their own country? It is because of this fundamental error which exists in this country, in regard to Central America being the route for commerce, and therefore the key to this continent.

This, Mr. Chairman, brings me to the second proposition in view of this particular point. What is Central America? It is an iron ligament connecting the twin sisters of North and South America. Instead of being a single point, as many imagine, looking at the maps in circulation, it is a long range of mountains, more than one thousand miles in length; having, therefore, on both sides, at least two thousand miles of sea-shore, equally accessible to all the nations of the earth. It is mountainous, and a wilderness inhabited only by semi-savages, although people of all nations, for years past, have had full knowledge of its advantages, and the utmost facilities to settle and become permanent citizens. It is a sultry and sickly region of the earth, and therefore shunned by all who are not compelled to remain there from demands of most important business or public duty. It was not inhabited by the Spaniards who first conquered it; and, sir, it will not be inhabited by the people of this country, as long as our broad savannas, rich prairies, and fertile fields of the West, are open to cultivation. In the face of these physical and local objections to this narrow, inhospitable shore, this Government has been directing its power and its patronage to the settlement and control of these Central American States, to the great neglect and the diversion of settlement and travel from the interior of our own country. The whole effort has been directed to the accumulation of power, and, as the treaty says, to the protection of the neutrality of these Central American routes of commerce.

This affection for Central American channels of trade, which requires to go by sea two thousand miles before attempting to cross this continent, grows out of another error, that water communication is better than land. I know that this idea has existed so long, that the great highway of nations will always be by sea wherever seas can be found, and that land will be disdained for the commerce of the world, that my voice is too feeble to controvert or change its convictions on the public mind. I will not attempt it. Even if I desired to do so, I have not the time; nor would it be considered germane to the subject before the Committee. But I will say, that the time will come when it will be easy to demonstrate to the people of this country that the highway of nations will be by land, and not by water, wherever land of ordinary topographical features can be found, upon which iron rails can be laid and locomotives execute their ordinary functions. If you were going to New York, would you, sir, go by sea or by land? Certainly, by land; for the voyage round by sea is circuitous and much longer. So it is from this point to San Francisco. The discrepancy is greater between the water and land route than it is between this point and New York. Would you travel from this point to Charleston by land or by sea? Unquestionably, by land. And when you travel by land, you will transport by land; for most of the value of commerce will find the travelled route the most economical route for transportation. I tell you that the direct route to the Pacific is westward, across this continent; and it is not true that the highway of nations is by water, and by the isthmus of Central America.

These Central American States, as I have said, are comparatively a wilderness, barren, mountainous, sultry, and sickly, and those who have been there look back upon the country with dread or disdain. How many of our citizens have perished there, on their way to California and on their return? Why, sir, they have gone down to their watery graves, not in single file, but in great armies, and the route by sea and by land has been strewed with the nation's victims that have perished by the way. The isthmus through which they passed is covered with the

rounded earthy monuments that mark the path of death and desolation at almost every step of this favorite way. Such is the character of the Panama route; and take any of these proposed lines, and you will find the same obstruction and the same forbidding aspect to deter the world from preferring the isthmus, when other more congenial countries have lines constructed through. I say, further, that the length of line which you attempt to hold power over is a serious objection to adopting this country as a dominion for us to maintain and protect. I submit, therefore, that it is an error to suppose that Central America is the key of this country; and if it were, you have not the power to hold, maintain, and protect it. A thousand miles on either side gives two thousand miles of sea-coast to protect. The President suggests, in his recent message to the Senate:

"We desire, as the leading Power on this continent, to open, and, if need be, to protect, every transit route across the isthmus, not only for our own benefit, but that of the world, and thus open a free access to Central America, and through it to our Pacific possessions."

Then he is for opening every route through the isthmus, and then he also proposes, "if need be, to protect" them. Do you not see that you are undertaking too much? What are you attempting to do? How many routes do you suppose are proposed to be made transit routes through that isthmus? Commence at Tehuantepec, and go down through Nicaragua, Honduras, Costa Rica, and Guatemala, and through all distant territories of that thousand miles of isthmus country, and you will find ten or fifteen routes proposed to be made great highways. Each one of these routes would require a navy to protect it. How do you protect the Panama route? You have a treaty, which calls upon the President, as you will perceive in his annual message, which requires him to keep a squadron of our navy at each end of that route, "to guaranty the neutrality of the isthmus of Panama, through which the Panama railroad passes, as well as the rights of sovereignty and property which New Granada has possession over the said territory." You recollect the events which have already occurred. You have attempted by treaty, and by the presence of your navy, to take possession and hold this line, and it is now costing you millions every year to sustain that power. If you go on and undertake to possess yourself of these ten or fifteen proposed routes through the isthmus, what kind of an army and navy will you require?

At one time, Commodore Mervine had upon the Pacific shore seven hundred sailors and marines, and at the same time he had three vessels, armed with ninety or one hundred guns. Three or four vessels have thus been standing sentry there, to guard the shores of a foreign country. And upon this side, Commodore Paulding has been required to keep under command a similar force, and that, too, while the country is at peace with all the world. What, then, would be the force required to defend "all the routes" which the President wishes to "open," and, "if need be, to protect?" Not four regiments, nor seven vessels; but ten times this force will not guard all the entrances for all these lines. You are undertaking more than this nation can or will perform. Instead of going directly west to find your way to India, or to San Francisco, you start, according to our present isthmus route of travel, directly south, and you go by the ocean instead of by land. If the railroad connection is carried through our continent, you can go to California in five or six days. It will be in a straight line, while you now take a circuitous route—two long sides of a triangle, instead of the short lines across the continent. And, should this Government embroil itself in a thousand difficulties and controversies for the purpose of holding this part of the continent, which in reality cannot be possessed and cannot be held, what, then, have we gained? Not the short or natural or safe route for commerce; but an everlasting tax on the people of this country to "protect and control." I say it cannot be held, because the country is too long, too remote, and too sickly; and it is too convenient for other nations to send in their navies, and too poor and mountainous to sustain a sufficient standing army.

There never can be a key to this great continent. There are too many open doors. There are too many passes through our own interior, there are too many through Mexico, too many through Central America, and too many through South America, for any one Power to control the destinies of this great continent, or the free passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific shores.

The argument which I wish to deduce from these enunciations is, that it is wrong in principle, as well as inexpedient and ruinous, for the Government of this country to set up a filibustering operation to secure the dominion of that country—for such, I aver, has been the policy of this Government for years past. It is no use to blink the action of the late Administration. Time after time have enunciations gone forth to our officers, similar to those which went forth from General Cass, calling upon the police of the high seas to check the adventurers which are going thereon. Yet many expeditions have been got up, in broad day; many times have they announced the calling of the roll and the embarkation of troops from our shores, and they have been permitted to go on without let or hindrance, although our Government could not have been ignorant of their repeated departures.

But, if we had been in doubt as to the indifference or acquiescence of the officers of our Government, the proof has been disclosed in a correspondence between General Wool and the Secretary of War. It appears, that when that officer, then in command upon the Pacific coast, expressed a determination to check such an expedition, he was informed, by the Secretary of War, that such an act on his part was deemed unnecessary, and that he had better attend to matters more pertinent to military affairs, and leave the civil authorities to control the filibustering operations of the country. If we add to this act of the Secretary of War the fact that expedition after expedition has escaped the official vigilance, it is clear that it has been the policy

of the Government, for years past, to blink or connive at the filibustering operations that have been going on in the country; and I therefore charge this, our present difficulty, as the legitimate result of the policy of a former Administration, which seems to conflict, in some respects, with the conduct of the present. It has been supposed by a former Administration, and by a new party, which now appears in this country, that the operations of private enterprise in the way of filibustering, and a general system by way of national treaty, national mail contracts, and other national expenditures by the public authorities of the country, all tending to the same end—the acquisition of Southern dominion—might harmonize and operate successfully together. But now, as you perceive by the President's late message, and also by the argument of gentlemen upon this floor, it is found that the two kinds of filibustering conflict; that the attempt to get dominion by the Government in its action, and the attempt upon the part of Walker, are either inconsistent, or some one has made a mistake in playing the game. However this may be, the plain, blunt manners of Commodore Paulding have brought upon the Administration the necessity of silencing, for the present, the co-operation or interruption of the filibuster, Walker.

Is this not the argument you find in the President's late message, and in his annual message for this year? Does not he, over and over again, reiterate the idea that it is necessary for this Government to occupy, to protect, and to maintain by power the various transit routes of that Central American country? And when he says he will take all those routes, comprising the long distance of one thousand miles; and when he speaks of further treaties which are being made between us and the Central American States, am I not right in presuming this Administration is engaged also in a different but efficient way to carry on a national instead of a private species of acquisition, which may properly be defined as national filibustering? I ask you what remains to the dominion of those Central American States? If we can go on and take that protection and guarantee of neutrality upon ourselves, I ask you how much power remains to the feeble States of Central America, when we have control of their lines of travel, and the requisite force which the President thinks should be at his command to sustain their "perfect neutrality?" We then become really the power of Central America; control of their transit lines includes all their lines of industry; for it is upon these lines that all wealth and settlements in that country will inevitably congregate. I deprecate the policy of this Government going a thousand miles away from its own soil, for the purpose of engaging in this kind of entanglement with other countries. It is against the wise counsels promulgated in the Farewell Address of Washington, against the principles taught by Jefferson, and all the patriots of this country, who have spoken of the policy to be observed towards other nations with whom we have intercourse. Let us therefore leave these Central American States to build their own railroads, open their own ways, take care of their own neutrality; and let us abstain from both national and private filibustering, and turn our attention to the development of our own vast interior, where our enterprise and energies will find ample field, and where the capital expended will remain among our own people. Such a policy will give employment to our people, activity to our industrial pursuits, and tend to preserve the continuance of peace and prosperity among the independent States of this continent.

But, Mr. Chairman, I wish to return to the position of Walker and the conduct of Commodore Paulding, for the purpose of presenting my views on their relative merits, since they seem to be forced into comparison or conflict by members of this House. I am not disposed to denounce Walker, while he stands, or should stand, as a criminal at the bar of our courts. Neither do the high-sounding titles with which he is disposed to encircle his preposterous pretensions add anything to his consideration. Such titles have always been assumed by those who have determined to usurp the power which the titles imply. It was done by the patriots who marched to Canada. They were all generals-in-chief. That was done by McGreggor when he made a descent upon the Florida coast. And such has been the course of Walker in all his expeditions. When he went to Sonora, he assumed the title of commander-in-chief, and assumed the functions of supreme power. All this is only proof of a particular purpose, rather than any right entailed by such a claim.

The question has been raised here, what are the rights of Walker in reference to his position in Central America? What right had he there? If, in former expeditions, he had acquired rights of property, they had been wrested from him; and he therefore had no rights, I contend, but those which proceed from mere assumption. His rights there were a fiction of law, too transparent to stand before this or any other audience; too faint and flimsy for officers of the navy or of the army to be deceived by. They could not conceive that he had any; and the accredited authorities of Nicaragua would hardly accord to him on their soil a fraction of domain equal to six feet by three.

What is the attitude of the Government of Nicaragua? That Government had implored you to restrain your citizens from lawless acts against her territory; and that, too, in view of the expedition of Walker himself, which he was then getting up against this unoffending State. Having thus a representation of the Government *de facto*, we are estopped from excusing the acts of Walker on the ground of any rights of sovereignty. If he ever did have rights to domain, they were given for purposes of colonization, like those acquired by Austin in Texas. But any one acquainted with Spanish customs knows that all such grants are dependent on the peaceable settlement and cultivation of the soil, all of which Walker forfeited by his assumptions of power and subsequent repulse by force of war. He must therefore proceed upon fictions; and we are informed that as soon as he landed he assumed that every-

thing necessary to his convenience belonged to the Government of Nicaragua, and that he was the Government. It is said of some of the blue laws of Connecticut, that the council voted that "the earth and the fullness thereof belong to the saints;" and, secondly, "resolved, that we are the saints." This, it is said, eased the consciences of those who were in great need of Indian lands. I suggest a resort of this kind to my friend from Massachusetts, [Mr. THAYER,] who informs us that "the Puritan descendants are in a tight place."

I do not deny that Walker went there boldly and bravely, and usurped a position which he held for a short time. But that position was lost by the efforts of the citizens of Central America, and he has no longer any right there, for he lost what he had by the fortune of war. How, then, is it that it can be maintained or held here, that he had rights, or that he is entitled to a higher position than that of the officer who, on being called upon by his Government, arrested and brought him back to these shores, to be punished for offences against our laws? But I have said more than I intended on the subject of Walker. I desire to say one word in regard to Commodore Paulding. It is not necessary for me to vindicate the navy of this country. It is the province of other members of this House to do so. The navy has vindicated its own character in many glorious achievements, and it is hardly necessary for any one to shield them from some reflections which have fallen against them. This Commodore Paulding has borne our flag for forty-five years gloriously on every sea. He comes before the world with honor unimpeached and unimpeachable. And yet, without a hearing, and without a trial, an attempt is made in this House to strip the epaulets from his shoulders, denounce, disgrace, and dismiss him from the service. These are terrible charges to bring against one who has long borne your standard, and now stands sentinel over your honor on a far-off, sultry, sickly shore. What has this officer done, to bring down such threats upon him? If gentlemen will examine the orders under which he acted, and consider the position which he occupied, they will find abundant cause to justify the act of a true and honest sailor.

It has been argued by gentlemen on this floor, that the power of this Government does not extend beyond a marine league from our shores. Admit that. As there are some doubts on that subject, how did Commodore Paulding construe that law? It is admitted by all, that the neutrality laws may be regarded as in some respects ambiguous. It was the province of this officer to obey orders, and not to cavil about the proper construction of laws. In matters of doubt, his orders should direct his course.

What were the orders? In the first place, they were transmitted to him beyond the reach of the marine league. Why were they sent beyond the league, if they were not in operation there? If it be true that the whole power of the Government should have been confined to the marine league, why were these orders sent to him while he was stationed on the shores of Central America, a thousand miles beyond the marine league? The fact of their being sent to him there shows conclusively that the Government had already construed the law to apply beyond the marine league. What, then, becomes of the argument as to Paulding's exercise of power beyond the marine league? He had the order, then, to apply them; how could he refrain? Instead, therefore, of this argument being applied to Commodore Paulding, let it be applied to the President; for to him, or to his Secretary, belongs the fault, if any exists, for having caused the exercise of that law beyond the marine league. Apply your censures to the principal, not to the agent. Stand by the dictum of law—*facit per alium, facit per se.*

Mr. SMITH, of Virginia. The question is not whether Commodore Paulding had a right to act as he did on the high seas, but whether he had a right to do so on the territory of another nation.

Mr. CURTIS. I will speak to that point now. I am glad that the gentleman reminded me of it. I have cut you off from the position as to the marine league, so far as Paulding is concerned, and have thrown the responsibility upon the Administration of the country, because the orders were sent to Commodore Paulding beyond the marine league. The argument that came from the member from Georgia, [Mr. STEPHENS,] that he should not have acted beyond the marine league, should now be taken back, at least his censures of Commodore Paulding. But the question propounded by the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. SMITH] now is, should he have acted within the marine league of Nicaragua? I fully concur in the principle that the dominion of Nicaragua and of all other nations extends to the headlands and bays, and to a marine league from their shores. But, under treaty stipulations, our vessels are permitted to moor in the harbors of Central America. Why are our vessels there? Why do they hang around the shores and within a marine league of Central America? For the purpose of protecting those avenues of trade, to interpose for the protection of our citizens in the transit over the isthmus. For what else are they kept there? They are there by the consent of Nicaragua, and at the suggestion of her minister here, for the purpose of protecting the rights of our citizens and maintaining the peace of the country.

I go still further. I hold that Commodore Paulding acted in obedience to his instructions, within the dominion of Nicaragua; and I appeal to the orders under which he acted, and to the position which he occupied. He had first received the orders of General Cass, which amount to nothing more than this: "Be on the alert. Look out for military expeditions. See that the neutrality laws are not violated." Lieutenant Almy, however, was not satisfied with this kind of order, and being here in the city of Washington when he received them, he applied to the Secretary of the Navy for more explicit instructions. He said, in substance, to the Secretary of the Navy, that the order of the Secretary of State seemed to apply only to the high seas, and asked what he was to do in port. Look at the response which he received from the Secretary of the Navy!

I do not agree with the gentleman from Alabama [Mr. MOORE] who spoke yesterday, who said the orders of the Secretary of the Navy did not authorize Commodore Paulding to take the steps taken by him. I agree with him, that the answer of the Secretary of the Navy was ambiguous. It was such as left it an open question, to approve or disapprove the conduct of that officer, whatever he might do. I am sorry there was not the courage and boldness displayed by the Secretary of the Navy to take the responsibility of his own act. Yet, sir, if you will read the order, and take into consideration the contiguity of the question and answer, I think you will see that the man exercising power under it had the right to strike or not to strike, at his own discretion, or as he might understand this order. He inquired of the Secretary of the Navy what he should do. The answer was: "You have the power; use it." Now, sir, I maintain that an officer of the army or the navy, when he receives instructions, unless they are clearly and unquestionably in contradiction to law or reason, cannot go beyond them. Sir, Lieutenant Almy left Washington and went to Mobile. He told the people there that this Administration was determined to execute the law, and to stop these expeditions, and upon that information the United States officers there took active measures to prevent the departure of the expedition.

But, sir, was Commodore Paulding himself to act under the orders given to Lieutenant Almy? Most certainly he was, because Lieutenant Almy was required to report to Commodore Paulding, and the orders given to him by the Secretary of the Navy must then govern the conduct of Commodore Paulding. Now, if any man will read those orders, I do not think he can come to any other conclusion than that, under them, it was his duty to exercise a reasonable discretion; and, if occasion required, act within the port of Nicaragua. I have read the orders carefully, and I think that, for myself, if I had received the orders under which Commodore Paulding was acting, I could not have done otherwise than to have followed the course which he pursued, relying, as the Commodore does, on the Secretary of War to bear me out, as it seemed to be his order to act.

Mr. SMITH, of Virginia. I desire, with the consent of the gentleman from Iowa, that he should answer this interrogatory. I wish to ask him whether there is anything in the instructions given to Commodore Paulding which justified him in capturing Walker on the shores of Nicaragua? I am willing to concede that the President did give him orders under which he was justified in going outside the marine league to capture Walker. That is the act of the President, and upon him will rest the responsibility. But I think that, for Commodore Paulding to go within the jurisdiction of Nicaragua for that purpose was an act of war, and that Commodore Paulding is responsible for that act of war.

Mr. CURTIS. The answer of the Secretary of the Navy to the inquiries of Lieutenant Almy, in my opinion, did give that authority to his discretion, because, what was the order? It was not to take the vessel, but it was to stop the expedition. I think any man who will read the order carefully will come to the conclusion that the act of Commodore Paulding in capturing Walker was only the exercise of a reasonable discretion in the execution of his orders. His orders were to act; and when the emergency came, he was not to stop to cavil about nice distinctions. His orders were to strike. He did strike, and I demand that justice shall be done him. If he exceeded his orders, the responsibility rests upon the President of the United States, for not defining his duties more distinctly.

Yes, sir, Commodore Paulding stands before this House, charged with a grave offence—in the language of the President, a "grave error." I ask gentlemen to look at the surrounding circumstances, and see whether he was guilty of any error. We have seen that Commodore Chatard has been removed, and that the order had gone out for his removal when Walker was taken by Commodore Paulding. It will be remembered that he was removed for not detaining Walker when within the marine league of Nicaragua. The United States officers at Mobile have also been censured by the President. Three of the naval officers of the United States, under the command of Commodore Paulding had been insulted, and when in full uniform were prevented from passing the lines of Walker's sentinels, and they demanded justice for their offended honor, which had been thus assailed. It is true that Walker says they were not in uniform, but they have certified that they were fully under arms—thus meaning the distinction which permits them to pass the lines of sentinels of all the countries, except those with which we are at war. This was a special indignity, which must have been pressed upon the Commodore, as it seemed to defy the power of self-protection against indignities shown our navy.

But, sir, there was further inducement for immediate action. There was the voice of woe and lamentation, which came up from the inhabitants of the country; the men, women, and children, saw their friends slain, their houses burned, and their villages left desolate. Murder and arson and robbery, he reports, had been committed, and the country was left to havoc and desolation. There was the cry for justice upon the part of the officers, and there was the cry for mercy from the people on shore. I say that, under these circumstances, with the instincts of a man, the heart of a sailor, and the defender of our honor, Commodore Paulding could not have done less than what he did. He is a stranger to me; but it is enough for me to know he is one of our standard-bearers, to induce me to render him this tribute of justice.

But, sir, Commodore Paulding needs no defence. If he were here himself, he would vindicate his own character. I am merely calling the attention of this House to the circumstances under which he acted. He has been treated roughly and harshly for conduct which should have called for praise, not condemnation—honor, not disgrace—from the representatives of his country.

Mr. Chairman, I have endeavored to argue that

it is not the policy of this country to intermeddle in the affairs of foreign nations. The less we have to do with their responsibilities, the better. I congratulate the people of this country on the general tone of the President's late message on the subject of filibustering, except so much of it as implies a willingness that the Government itself may proceed by some such means to acquire dominion and power.

I am willing to see our nation grow internally and externally, but I desire to make acquisition only by fair and honorable means. I wish to see surrounding States attracted by our wisdom and virtue, and not forced in by stratagems or fraud. I desire, for this purpose, that our deportment towards contiguous countries should be especially conciliatory and generous. I have no doubt of our ultimate expansion to the limits of this continent, but I leave that to the destiny of nations and the natural affinities that draw less to greater bodies. I wish to see the rights of the feeblest nation respected and maintained, and I subscribe most heartily to the sentiment quoted by the President, as a rule of national as well as Divine law, that "whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so unto them."

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